



E is for Entrepreneurship: Career Teachers Graduate to Startup Success

A secret jewel that can't be found at the famous Herkimer Diamond Mine has been discovered. Herkimer business Educators Plus was recognized for the company's innovative business concept with an SBA Small Business Excellence Award at the May 9th luncheon in Syracuse.

Owners Tammy Roorda and Theresa Ricci opened the doors a year ago on April 28th and have been developing loyal customers ever since. Located on Albany Street, the store offers a specialized line of educational materials to enhance the teacher's classroom and curriculum.

Parents who home school their children can find assistance on structuring their lesson plans to meet the New York State standards as well as special ordering options for hard-to-find curriculum materials.

Educators Plus is currently the only store of its kind in the Mohawk Valley, as the Red Apple in New Hartford closed in 2007. The educational resources and services offered are a tremendous asset to the surrounding communities, supporting the needs of schools, home-school environments, and community colleges. Teachers gladly travel from cities such as Rome to find the materials and supplies they need for instruction at Educators Plus.

The store diversifies its customer base by offering tutoring for students K-12 after school, on weekends and during school vacations. Regents examinations are quickly approaching and Educators Plus has seen an increase in the number of high school age students requesting tutoring sessions.

Schools in the Mohawk Valley are utilizing Theresa and Tammy's educational expertise by placing purchase orders for supplies with Educators Plus.

Tammy and Theresa have over 45 years of combined teaching experience; Tammy teaches elementary art while down the hallway Theresa teaches second grade at Benton Hall Academy in Little Falls. Since they teach during regular school hours, the business hours of Educators Plus are normally after school and weekends, with extended hours during school vacations.

While teaching full time, both studied the essentials of entrepreneurship to prepare for owning their own business. Theresa and Tammy attended the Women's Business Center of New York State's Small Business Training Program and graduated in March 2007.

"Theresa Ricci and Tammy Roorda used their knowledge and background in education to create a unique business to meet the needs of teachers, parents and children in the heart of the Mohawk Valley. With the training and counseling support of the Women's Business Center, they are able to live their entrepreneurial dream by owning and operating Educators Plus," noted SBA Syracuse District Director Bernard J. Paprocki.

Educators Plus was selected for an SBA Small Business Excellence Award in 2008 for the store's unique services and products as well as the owners' ability to operate a small business while still working another full time position.

Tammy and Theresa were nominated for the award by Donna Rebisz, project director at the Women's Business Center of New York State in Utica.